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THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL JOURNAL

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Educational News and Editorial Comment

SILENT READING

One of the most gratifying indications of the success of scientific studies in education is to be found in the fact that school systems are beginning to turn the discoveries of the educational laboratories into practical procedures in their classrooms. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, the school officers in charge of primary education, Miss Eva M. Davis and Miss C. Mabel Smith, have issued a bulletin of fifty-six pages which is an excellent summary of scientific studies of reading and a handbook of practical advice to teachers.

The authors of this bulletin have made a clear case for the introduction of exercises in silent reading and have filled somewhat more than one-half of their monograph with practical exercises to be used by the teacher. They have also described in detail methods of detecting and remedying defects in pupils. The bulletin modestly asserts that it makes no claim to originality. It is, however, one of the most useful handbooks, if not indeed the most useful, that deals with the problems of reading.

One table which is especially suggestive will be quoted as indicating the direct empirical method which is exhibited throughout the monograph. This table, with its explanatory introduction, is as follows:

Having grouped the pupils according to their abilities in silent reading and having selected a type method to be used as a basic method in teaching reading, the next step in diagnosis is to analyze the special disabilities of individuals and groups.

According to the Anderson-Merton study the typical errors in silent reading are as follows:

	Frequency	Percentage
1. Meager meaning vocabulary.....	741	33
2. Inability to find essential idea.....	423	19
3. Omission of part of idea due to short unit of visual recognition	306	14
4. Giving general thought instead of specific answer or specific instances instead of general thought; i.e., inability to get definite information from material read	293	13
5. Inaccuracy due to carelessness or haste.....	90	4
6. Failure to note carefully small words or key words.....	95	4
7. Failure to differentiate between words similar in spelling	76	3
8. Substitution of pupil's own thought for that in paragraph	97	4
9. Inability to think logically in response to question	91	4

When individual pupils are under observation the following defects may be observed:

1. Reading word by word rather than by thought groups. (Short perception span.)
2. Vocalization and lip movement.
3. Using finger to follow line. (Improper eye movement.)
4. Short span of attention, resulting in loss of place, omission, and repetition of words.
5. Slow rate of silent reading, due partly to the fact that they have "set" that particular pace.
6. Inappropriate motor habits in making the return sweep.
7. Irregular progression of attention from left to right.
8. Failure or inability to scrutinize the words in sufficient detail to recognize significant parts.
9. Inability to analyze new words.
10. Pernicious habits of day-dreaming, dawdling, or wasting time.
11. Word-blindness or alexia.

SCHOOL BOARDS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

The public school system of the city of Washington has been for years a storm center. There are peculiar social and administrative conditions which complicate school matters in the national capital. When the present superintendent was appointed, it was recognized by the board of education and by educational adminis-

trators that a strenuous effort was to be made under the guidance of a thoroughly trained man to lift Washington out of the administrative complications that have so long hindered the development of the school system.

Superintendent Ballou has cleared up one matter after another. He has now come to one of the crucial problems of organization which is of such general importance that his efforts to cope with it will be watched with great interest.

The following extract from an article published in one of the Washington papers gives an account of Superintendent Ballou's attitude on the proposal that a series of standing committees take over the business of the board.

The Superintendent made it clear last night that he is a subordinate of the board and does not intend to dictate to that body, but that his opposition to standing committees is based solely upon his desire to see the board function in a modern businesslike manner and with dispatch. By operating as a committee of the whole, Dr. Ballou believes the board will not accomplish this, but will facilitate matters coming before it for disposition.

Progressive boards of education, Dr. Ballou said, have dropped all standing committees and are functioning as a whole. Seven or eight years ago, he said, school boards were virtually operated by various committees. But today 120 or 130 of the school boards in the largest cities of the country have eliminated standing committees.

In his efforts to convince the board that the re-establishment of standing committees is not in keeping with progressive educational tendencies, Superintendent Ballou also will wage a war on the executive sessions of the board, more popularly known as the "star chamber" proceedings.

Dr. Ballou is of the firm opinion that 99 per cent of the business of the board can and should be transacted in public meetings. At the present time, it was pointed out, the board disposes of about 10 per cent of its business in the "dummy" public sessions, while disposing of matters which should come to the attention of the public behind closed doors.

Dr. Ballou's opposition to standing committees of a school board was first made in a book he wrote in 1914, while he was director of the department of educational investigation and measurement of the Boston public schools, and which was published by Harvard University.

"Whatever one's assumption may be concerning the legal power or general influence of a standing committee," Dr. Ballou said, "a careful study of its work in the light of effective school administration can lead only to the inevitable conclusion that the committee form of organization of the board of education is based on erroneous conception of the functions of the board and of the proper method of discharging them."

"My contention is based on the following propositions:

"1. The small standing committee is likely to play a disproportionately large part in the transaction of the board's business.

"2. The committee form of organization increases materially the opportunities for the exercise of pernicious influences.

"3. The committee system of organization violates four fundamental principles of effective school administration: (a) the duties of the separate committees of the board cannot be so defined that overlapping of authority is avoided; (b) therefore the responsibility of each committee cannot be adequately fixed; (c) hence the accountability of each committee cannot be insisted on; and (d) the committee system tends to confuse lay control with professional and executive management.

"The public schools belong to the people. The people should control the schools through some agency created directly or indirectly by the will of the people.

"It is the business of this lay board to exercise general control over the school system and to determine educational policies. The professional and executive management should be delegated by the board to those professional educators of its own selection whose education, training and experience qualify them to direct and manage a system of public education. The committee system interferes with this differentiation of the functions of the board and its professional officers in that a large part of the work delegated to every committee of the board is executive work which should be performed by executive officers. It is difficult, if not quite impossible, to maintain this essential division of labor between the board and its officers under the committee system of organization."

RURAL SCHOOL LEAFLETS

The Bureau of Education has commenced the publication of a series of leaflets dealing with the problems of rural schools. This is a part of the new commissioner's policy of emphasis on the national problem of improving conditions in the one-room country school.

The Bureau of Education is prepared also to issue to communities for use in connection with these leaflets lantern slides and films showing in a concrete way what has already been accomplished along the lines advocated in the text of the leaflets. For example, the first leaflet is on *School Consolidation*, and the second is on *Transportation of Rural Pupils*. Slides and films have been prepared on each of these topics.

The third leaflet, not yet issued but shortly to come from the press, is on *A Rural Teacher's Library*. The material which is

offered by the Bureau in this connection is a series of lists of books and advice as to methods of securing the books.

In ordering these publications reference should be made to the Rural School Leaflets.

SOCIAL STUDIES IN THE SCHOOLS

The following editorial, entitled "A Step Forward in Popular Education," appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*:

The introduction of a course in elementary economics and social service in the grammar schools is a belated but most welcome step now to be taken by our local school authorities. Mr. Mortenson is to be congratulated that his record as head of the Chicago public schools is to include such an innovation.

The course has been laid down by educational experts of the University of Chicago and the head of the department of economics, Professor Marshall, and therefore promises to be practical. We see no reason why the elements of economics and the basic principles of our social organization should not be taught in the upper grammar grades. They are not beyond the capacity of youth; and if they are not taught in the grammar schools, the large proportion of our young people who do not reach the secondary schools will miss them altogether.

This is a very serious omission in our system of popular instruction. Its effects are shown in a pervasive ignorance of matters of vital importance to our well-being. It gives the demagogue and the quack an undue advantage and makes us the victims of persistent fallacies in legislation and public action. Progress is retarded by repeated blunders from which a knowledge of the elements of economics and of our social order would save us had we been well grounded at school. There is nothing abstruse about these elements any more than those of arithmetic and geography, and a knowledge of them will give tests of public action which our public now lacks.

Responsible newspapers will especially welcome this new course of instruction, for there is nothing clearer in journalistic experience than the difficulty of directing public opinion which has no sound foundation in elementary knowledge. When we, men and women who are the public, have passed beyond school age and are preoccupied with the business of getting a living, we have little time for catching up with the omissions of our schooling, and it takes a lifetime to pick up, as we must here and there, the knowledge of the laws and forces which govern our affairs. In this state we are open to any gust of prejudice or any passing pressure of fancied interest. We have no sound standards, and the exposition or exhortation of the press, even such as is disinterested and sincere, finds little response.

It is the function of a democratic school system to prepare youth to go into life with at least a rudimentary equipment of knowledge of the laws

which govern our economic and social activities. And we are confident that this equipment can be supplied by the public schools.

JANITORIAL SERVICE BY CONTRACT

The Board of Education of Cincinnati has had in years past the harassing experiences which many other cities have had with school janitors. During the war period and immediately following, the demands for wages became, as the Board believed, excessive. Not only so, but the janitors were difficult to control because they used the power of a very compact organization to secure their own way in the handling of the buildings.

In the midst of these difficulties the superintendent hit on a plan which has worked with the highest degree of success. A contractor was found who undertook for a fixed sum daily to care for all of the buildings of the city. This contractor has a force of men who are specialists. There are, for example, expert window-washers, and there are expert grass-cutters. These squads make the circuit of the buildings periodically and perform at each building the services of their special type. There are various ranks of expert engineers who supervise the heating of the buildings.

The Board of Education has nothing to do with the details of the organization. The squads of workers move about under the directions of the contractor. He works under an agreement which makes him responsible for the full care of the buildings. If the specifications are not lived up to in any respect, the Board of Education deals with the one man.

The plan is not only successful in keeping the buildings in better condition than ever before, but also very economical as contrasted with the old method of dealing with individual janitors. Indeed, the superintendent was recently able to announce that the continuation of the plan next year will be under financial conditions even more favorable to the schools.

The announcement in the *School Index* is as follows:

A large part of the meeting of the Board of Education last Monday afternoon was taken up with the opening and reading of bids for janitor service in the schools. There were many individual bids, some for one school and others for two or more. The bid of Mr. W. S. Bray of \$783 a day for seventy-six schools, is apparently the lowest bid. The present contract held by Mr.

James M. Sprague is \$1,002 a day. Figuring on the acceptance of Mr. Bray's bid, it is estimated that \$38,000 can be saved in this calendar year, which would permit operation of the schools for two days.

It is hoped that an additional saving over last year may be made through the receipt of lower bids for coal and because less coal will be required than last year due to the mild winter. It is therefore not beyond possibility that another day or two may be added in September.

THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL ABANDONED AT FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

For twenty-five years we have had in Fort Wayne thoroughly departmentalized intermediate schools, consisting of seventh and eighth grades, grouped into five or six units of 160 to 400 pupils each. The teachers in these schools were for the most part middle-aged women who had been transferred from the elementary grades without any particular preparation for special work. None were college graduates; few had even so much as two years of normal training. The principals were for the most part teachers who had been promoted from the grades. About one-half had done considerable normal and college work in education. About 75 per cent of the school week was spent upon English, history, geography, and arithmetic, the remainder divided among manual training, domestic science, art, music, and physical education. (Query: Is this type of organization a junior high school? I judge that at least 60 per cent of the so-called junior high schools are no more than just this sort of intermediate school.)

I was a teacher in the high school here for eight years, coming into close contact with children entering from the eighth grade. For five years following I was principal of the high school, with a fine opportunity of knowing the capacities of these children as revealed in their ninth-grade work. We were pretty well satisfied with the intermediate school. The failures in the ninth grade were consistently fewer, subject by subject, than the averages over the country. The pupils were good workers; morale was high; disciplinary problems were few and not serious. The transfers from the eighth grade to the ninth grade in those thirteen years never fell below 88 per cent, were often 94 per cent, and averaged 92 per cent.

Then came the establishment of the so-called junior high school. With no change in principals, no change in teachers except for

additions to the faculties, inconsiderable changes in equipment and building arrangements, there was added to the curriculum described: Latin (elective but practically forced upon all the brighter children), typewriting (elective), millinery, general science, printing (elective), auditorium, "junior high mathematics" (substituted for arithmetic), and various forms of extra-curricular activities. The children were receiving school grades in fourteen to sixteen subjects of instruction. In the high school the results were reflected with the first class attempting the "enriched" curriculum. All departments reported a loss in ability of entering pupils to concentrate upon the subject in hand, a loss in ability to work, a looseness of morale, and a failure in reasonable discipline which we had not heretofore known. And these failures increased progressively from year to year. Rightly or wrongly we attributed most of this decline to the overcrowding of the curriculum in the seventh and eighth grades—a position in which we were strongly supported by many parents who were alarmed by the apparent superficiality of their children's attainments. When to these conditions we were compelled to add the undeniable facts that our ninth-grade enrolments showed no perceptible gain and that the per capita cost of instruction in the junior high schools approximated the cost of the high schools, it seemed wise to us to return to the simpler type of intermediate school. This we have done, retaining only the general science and auditorium work, both materially reduced in time allotment and in content. We shall know within two or three years whether or not the reversion to the simpler organization will cure our evils. Until we shall have had opportunity to judge, we shall go on in the way which we formerly found safe.

Before we shall be ready to commit ourselves to the junior high school movement we shall wish certain information upon three matters which do not seem certain today. We wish to know, first, that the ninth-grade child, fourteen and one-half years of age, is more closely allied psychologically and socially with the seventh-grade child, twelve and one-half years of age, and the eighth-grade child, thirteen and one-half years of age, than he is with the tenth-grade child, fifteen and one-half years of age. Our impression is

that he is not; but we shall hold our impressions subject to correction in the presence of reliable data. Second, if such closer alliance can be established, we shall wish to know with certainty that the widely diversified curriculum with wavy electives is better for the mental growth of the child than the simpler, more compact courses. (Query: Is not the present tendency in college and high school to restrict the use of electives and to reduce the number of subjects of instruction? Is it likely that the child of twelve or thirteen will be wiser in elections than the older student in high school and college? If four subjects constitute a "rich" enough course for high school and three or four for college, are not fourteen or sixteen too heavy a diet for little children?) We shall wish to assure ourselves, further, that the drill phase of education can be completed by the end of the sixth grade or even the seventh grade. Judging from the abysmal ignorance of the usual ninth-grade child in such matters of drill as spelling, arithmetic, geographical facts, elementary grammar, etc., we fear that to terminate drill work with the sixth grade will only leave confusion worse confounded.

Finally, we believe that the safety of this republic demands that its citizen body shall possess a great fund of *common* knowledge upon which to rear a national fabric. We cannot believe that this common fund can be accumulated in six years of school. We do believe that not less than eight years, possibly even more, should be devoted to that work. Thus believing, we think it unwise and dangerous to urge children into elections and differentiations at an age so early that sane and mature judgments are wholly impossible.

L. C. WARD

Superintendent of Schools

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

SCHOOL MAGAZINES

The editors of the *Elementary School Journal* are asked from time to time to recommend educational periodicals for school libraries. They have never been able to give a better answer to such an inquiry than that published in *School Topics*, the school publication of the city of Cleveland, which is reproduced in full as follows:

American School Board Journal—Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee, Wis. Contains articles on administration of schools. Most valuable for the plans and illustrations of new schools which appear in each number. Architects find these helpful.

Education—Palmer Co., 120 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. Devoted to the science, art, philosophy, and literature of education. September, 1921, number contains good articles on home furnishing in the junior high school.

Educational Administration and Supervision—Warwick and York, Baltimore, Md. Edited by W. C. Bagley, W. W. Charters, Lotus D. Coffman, Alexander Inglis, David Snedden, George Strayer. Its field is state and county systems including rural education and educational legislation; city school systems including problems on administration and supervision.

Educational Review—Educational Review Publishing Co., Garden City, N.Y. Discusses important problems of the day in all fields. Has a new feature, the portraits of prominent educators.

Elementary School Journal—Department of Education, University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill. One of the best educational periodicals devoted to elementary education. Gives practical, definite aid to the teacher. Articles are by authorities and represent the forward steps in education.

Journal of Educational Psychology—Warwick and York, Baltimore, Md. Devoted primarily to the scientific study of problems of learning and teaching. Contains the latest and some of the best available material on educational tests and measurements. Written for the psychologist.

Journal of Educational Research—Public School Publishing Co., Bloomington, Ill. Official organ of the National Association of Directors of Educational Research. Treats of same subjects as the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, but in a more popular way. Its object is to popularize and make known the problems and results of tests and measurements to teachers and laymen.

Kindergarten and Primary Magazine—Manistee, Mich. A guide book in child training. Gives practical hints and definite suggestions for the kindergartner and first-grade teacher. One of the best periodicals of its kind.

Normal Instructor and Primary Plans—F. A. Owen, Dansville, N.Y. Gives practical suggestions for the first six grades. Contains cut-out figures, a sheet of pictures for picture study, suggestions for holiday decorations, etc. Specially helpful for the teachers in rural schools.

School and Society—Science Press, Garrison, N.Y. A weekly publication. Interested in all phases of modern education. Always contains some worthwhile contribution from a well-known educator. Has timely notes on current problems.

School Review—Department of Education, University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill. One of the best periodicals devoted almost entirely to the problems of the high school. A periodical every high-school teacher will be interested in.

Teachers College Record—Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City. Quarterly publication. Contains articles by authorities on many phases of education.

English Journal—University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill. Although written for the teacher of English, it contains many articles of general interest.

Journal of Geography—2249 Calumet Ave., Chicago, Ill. The official organ of the National Council of Geography Teachers.

Journal of Home Economics—American Home Economics Association, Baltimore, Md. "For those interested in homemaking, institution management, and educational work in home economics."

Manual Training Magazine—Manual Arts Press, Peoria, Ill. Devoted to the manual arts in vocational and general education.

School Arts Magazine—School Arts Magazine, 26 Foster St., Worcester, Mass. "An illustrated publication for those interested in art and industrial work." Contains many suggestions for the art teacher. Each number is profusely illustrated.

THE PROVIDENCE BANK OF HEALTH

The city of Providence, Rhode Island, has a plan for encouraging the cultivation of health habits among the school children of the city which consists in keeping from day to day in account books supplied to the pupils records of their efforts to conform to a set of health rules. The first two pages of the account book set forth the plan in the following statements.

The Province Bank of Health is a plan to improve the health of school children and to teach them correct health habits.

Each schoolroom which adopts this plan becomes a bank of health.

Each bank has a president, a head cashier, an assistant cashier, and a receiving teller for each row.

The teacher is the president.

The other officers are selected from among the pupils. The president appoints the officers for the first week, but after that they are appointed in the order of their credits in their pass-books, the one receiving the highest number being made head cashier, and so on.

Every morning deposit slips will be given to the pupils on which they will mark with an x the rules they have kept on the preceding day. The tellers will collect these and enter the credits in the bank book. A blue pencil star for each rule observed.

Every Friday the assistant cashier will add the total credits, and the head cashier will place stars in the books as follows: A red star for 30 points, a green star for 40 points, a silver star for 45 points, and a gold star for 50 points or over.

Report blanks will be supplied so that the president of the bank can make a report of all deposits for the entire term, this report to be mailed at the end of the term to the Director of Physical Education, School Department, 9 Exchange Terrace, Providence, Rhode Island.

HEALTH RULES

(Stand up straight; sit up straight)

1. Sleep ten hours with windows open.
2. Brush the teeth the first thing in the morning and before going to bed at night. Use tooth powder or tooth paste at night.
3. Wash face and hands, neck and ears, brush and comb hair, and clean finger nails before breakfast.
4. Eat a good breakfast (fruit, cereal, milk, bread and butter, and egg).
5. Exercise in the open air two hours a day.
6. Take five deep breaths of fresh air three times daily.
7. Wash hands and face before each meal.
8. Take a hot bath at least once a week.
9. Daily attention to toilet.

The following notes explain and amplify the foregoing rules:

Rule 1. For children under twelve; nine hours if over twelve.

Rule 2. If possible, brush the teeth also after each meal.

Rule 3. It is desirable that the face and hands be washed before every meal.

Rule 8. A hot bath twice a week is better than once a week.

Note.—Ask your parents to take you to the doctor or dentist when the school doctor or school nurse finds anything the matter with you.